



*Council for Subject Associations*  
***A Voice for Subjects***

## Guardians of subject expertise – the subject associations in 2015

Subject associations reach:

- **Thousands** of schools
- **Tens of thousands** of teachers
- And benefit **MILLIONS** of pupils

In 2013, the Council for Subject Associations contributed a think piece to the document “Towards a College of Teaching – raising the status of the profession”. In this document (which can be read on the CfSA website <http://tinyurl.com/px95t99>) the work of the subject associations was explained in general terms. Two years later, further progress has been made towards a College of Teaching. Subject associations engage daily with thousands of teachers and can offer their support to the College with their reach, their expertise and their understanding of what makes a vibrant membership body in the world of education.

The collective reach of the subject teaching associations in 2015 is remarkable. In the context of the potential creation of a College of Teaching, subject associations already represent the thoughtful and committed professionals within the teaching community who will be essential for the success of this endeavour.

### **Subject knowledge and pedagogy**

Subject associations affect all areas of teacher education and continuing professionalism. They have a long history of partnership with university researchers: both in subject knowledge and subject pedagogy and continue to take forward the teaching and learning of their disciplines. Subject specialism lies at the heart of many teachers’ professional identity and the ability to engage with like-minded colleagues in their subject community develops both their subject knowledge and pedagogy.

Of the 500,000 teachers in England, currently, more than **65,000** are full members of subject associations and over **250,000** are connected to subject associations by e-newsletters, social media and attendance at events

**Every one** of the 3,329 maintained secondary schools in England has some subject association members

Of the 16,788 primary schools in England currently we estimate that **50%** have at least one subject association member

Of the 2,411 independent schools in England: **100%** of secondary schools have at least one subject association member

**University partnerships** through subject associations ensure that cutting edge national and international academic research is made available and understandable to school students

Subject discipline, subject knowledge and subject pedagogy are indivisible. Teachers need not only to know their subject – or with primary teachers a number of subjects – but they need to *how and why* to teach this content to young people and what progression in those subject areas looks like. Subject associations provide this for their memberships and, through university partnerships, ensure that cutting edge, academic research finds an audience with schools and is translated for pupils by teachers.

### **Membership**

Membership of most subject associations includes: primary and secondary teachers, beginning teachers, teacher educators, advisers/inspectors, academics, undergraduate and postgraduate students, infant, primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, academies, libraries, societies, museums, businesses and interested members of the public. Through print and online publications, including academic journals, and by working with overseas governments, subject associations ensure the high quality of teaching across subjects in England and the strong commitment to subject discipline is often seen as world leading. Subject associations have a strong international as well as a national reach.

### **Communities of practice**

Subject associations through formal and informal communities provide peer-to-peer support networks and opportunities to engage with leading practitioners. Through subject association partnerships those in ITT have been able to develop effective mentor communities to support those new to the profession.

### **Professional advice to policy makers**

Subject associations speak for their subject communities; they are able to undertake research into their member's concerns and to reflect these back to policy makers. The charitable remit and often highly democratic nature of subject associations ensure that they are never only one lone voice but are the collective voice of their subject community. Their strength lies in the many hundreds of teachers and academics who willingly volunteer for their subject: from running branches, to editing journals and from writing articles and web resources to giving conference workshops and lectures.

### **Quality marks and chartered status**

Most subject associations are charities and many have a long and distinguished history having been formed by teachers and academics as universal elementary schooling began to widen and take on a broader curriculum in the latter years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many hold royal charters and run Chartered Teacher schemes and successful Quality Mark schemes.